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**GUIDELINES AND CRITERIA FOR THE EVALUATION OF PROTECTED AREAS
TO BE LISTED UNDER THE SPAW PROTOCOL**

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INTRODUCTION

1. The First Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the SPAW Protocol (24-25 September 2001, Havana, Cuba) agreed to develop guidelines and criteria for the evaluation of protected areas to be listed under the SPAW Protocol.
2. The procedures for the establishment of the list of protected areas are outlined in Article 7(3) of the SPAW Protocol.
3. According to Article 7 of the SPAW Protocol, the Parties shall establish a list of protected areas to create a regional network of protected areas and develop a cooperation programme. The purpose of this List is to identify those areas that are of particular importance to the Wider Caribbean region, that are to be accorded priority for scientific and technical research pursuant to Article 17, and that are to be accorded priority for mutual assistance pursuant to Article 18, and to protect the listed areas from activities that would undermine the purposes for which they were listed.
4. Nominations to the List must be supported by documentation demonstrating that the nomination fulfils the common guidelines and criteria on matters adopted by the Parties and established pursuant to Article 21 as set forth in this document.
5. Under Article 21, the Parties agree to adopt common guidelines and criteria to assist with the identification, selection, establishment, management and provision of information on protected areas.
6. For the purposes of these listing guidelines, the SPAW Protocol defines "protected areas" in Articles 1 and 4. "Protected Area" refers to an area that has been established pursuant to Article 4.
7. The regional network of protected areas will contribute to achieving the targets of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD, 26 August - 4 September 2002) regarding the establishment of representative networks of protected areas under multilateral agreements, programmes, and processes.
8. Protected areas that are being proposed for listing will thereby enter a programme intended to assist these protected areas in complying with all the operational/management requirements as stated in this document.

A. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

9. In establishing the SPAW List of Protected Areas, the Parties will be guided by the following general principles:
 - I. The List of Protected Areas shall comprise areas protected in order to sustain the natural resources of the Wider Caribbean region, and to encourage ecologically sound and appropriate use, understanding and enjoyment, pursuant to SPAW Article 4.
 - II. Such areas shall contribute to:
 - Protecting and preserving areas, habitats and species with special ecological, cultural and socio-economic values;
 - Preventing species from becoming endangered or threatened, in accordance with SPAW Articles 4.2(b), 3.3, and 10.1; and
 - Providing for the special needs of threatened, endangered, endemic or migratory species, in particular those species in Annexes I, II and III.
 - III. The Protected Areas will together form a network, which will contribute to the effective conservation of the natural heritage of the Caribbean.
 - IV. The Parties shall develop co-operative agreements on bilateral and multilateral bases in the field of conservation and management of natural areas to promote the effectiveness of the network. The network will be used as a tool to promote regional and international cooperation in relation to complementary environmental treaties, consistent with the SPAW criteria and listing process.
 - V. The network should ultimately comprise a comprehensive and representative system of protected areas in the Wider Caribbean region, across all bioregions and across the range of ecosystems within each bioregion.
 - VI. No limit is imposed on the total number of areas included in the List nor on the number of areas any individual Party can propose for inscription.
 - VII. The areas will be selected on a scientific, technical, cultural and socio-economic basis and included in the List based on the criteria set out below.
 - VIII. Areas proposed for listing must have in place legal, institutional and management frameworks for the protection and conservation of their natural features.
 - IX. The network should contribute to the adaptation and mitigation of the impact of global climate change to the extent possible. The protection of the range of functional habitats within the eco-region should be able to enhance the adaptation of species as climatic conditions alter and to increase the resilience of the eco-region.
 - X. Any area to be included in the list of protected areas recognized by the SPAW Protocol must fulfil the requirements of the SPAW Protocol, and conform to the following guidelines and criteria:

B. ECOLOGICAL, CULTURAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CRITERIA

10. Only protected areas established consistent with Article 4 will be considered for inclusion on the List. Article 4 states that protected areas shall be established with a view to sustaining the natural resources of the Wider Caribbean region, and encouraging ecologically sound, and appropriate use, understanding, and enjoyment of these areas, in accordance with the objectives and characteristics of each of them.
11. A Protected Area must conform to at least one of the Ecological Criteria and, where applicable, to at least one¹ of the Cultural and Socio-Economic Criteria. Where the Protected Area additionally fulfils several of the desirable criteria, the case for its inclusion in the List is strengthened.
12. It must also be adequate to the long-term conservation of the elements for which it seeks to be listed.

Ecological Criteria

- a) Representativeness - The area includes physiographic features, populations of species, habitats and ecosystem types or ecological processes that are representative of the country, region or eco-region.
- b) Conservation value - The area contributes to the conservation, including management, of the species, subspecies or populations of flora and fauna present in it, either as permanent residents, or during some life cycle stages, with the objective of preserving them as functioning members of their ecological communities, and preventing them from becoming threatened or endangered, both locally and throughout their range.
- c) Rarity - The area conserves unique or rare species, habitats, or ecosystems. An area or ecosystem is rare if it is among the few of its kind in the country or Wider Caribbean Region or has been seriously depleted across its range. The area may contain habitats that occur in a limited area, or rare, endemic, threatened or endangered species that are geographically restricted in their distribution.
- d) Naturalness (Level of disturbance) - The area has to a high degree been protected from or has not been subjected to, human-induced change, and the natural environment is thus relatively free from biophysical disturbance caused by human influence.
- e) Critical habitats - The area contains populations, habitats or ecosystems that are critical to the survival and/or recovery of endangered, threatened or endemic species, or to species listed in Annex I, II or III of the Protocol.
- f) Diversity - The area contains the variety or richness of species, communities, ecosystems, landscapes, seascapes and genetic diversity necessary for its long-term viability and integrity. This criterion is especially applicable where the area provides habitat for endangered, threatened, endemic and/or migratory species, and species listed in the Annexes to the Protocol.

- g) Connectivity/coherence -The area is adjacent to or ecologically connected to another protected area, or is within an ecological or biological corridor, and thus contributes to maintaining the ecological integrity of the Wider Caribbean Region. This can apply for Protected Areas within one country or which transcend political boundaries.
- h) Resilience - The area contains biological components (habitats, species populations) that have demonstrated the ability to recover from disturbances in a reasonable timeframe, or are naturally resistant to threats, such as climate change, and the protection of such areas enhances the recovery of damaged ecosystems elsewhere in the eco-region by providing a source of larvae and juveniles.

Cultural and Socio-Economic Criteria

- a) Productivity - The protected area helps conserve, maintain or restore natural processes that contribute to increasing the abundance of natural resources used by humans, and consequently contribute to regional sustainable development.
- b) Cultural and traditional use - The protected area **has** a special value in a regional context for the conservation, maintenance or restoration of the productivity and biological integrity of natural resources that provide for sustainable traditional or cultural activities, such as those of indigenous communities.
- c) Socio-economic benefits - The protected area **has** special value in a regional context for the conservation, maintenance or restoration of the productivity and biological integrity of natural resources that provide for economic or social benefits of user groups such as subsistence fishermen and rural communities, or economic sectors such as tourism.

C. PROTECTION, PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

- 13. The protected area **must** be subject to a legal framework, guaranteeing its effective long-term protection, in conformity with the Party's national legislation and international law, and consistent with the SPAW Protocol, including Articles 3, 4, 5 and 6.
- 14. Any protected area to be listed **must** have a management framework and implementing mechanisms that conform to the following:

Management framework

- a) The protected area **must** have a management framework that has been adopted by the Party and specifies the legal and institutional framework and protection measures applicable to the area consistent with Article 6 of the Protocol.
- b) The protected area **must** have a functional management body with the authority and means to implement the framework.
- c) Conservation and management objectives for the area **must** be clearly defined in nomination documentation, management guidelines and the management framework and be implemented in a manner consistent with Article 5.2.

- d) The protected area management framework **should**, where possible, be integrated within the larger planning framework of the Party.
- e) The planning, management and enforcement measures identified **should** be based on available traditional, scientific, technical and management-oriented knowledge and information. The management framework **should** have programmes to address shortcomings in knowledge and information

Evaluation

- 15. The framework **must** include appropriate indicators to measure management success, pursuant to Article 6.2(c).
- 16. **NOTE:** For the reporting procedure, and in order to promote cooperation, documentation should demonstrate that the Party concurs with the participation of the listed area in the cooperation programme pursuant to Article 7.

Stakeholders

- 17. The relevant stakeholders and local communities **should** be involved through inclusive and participatory processes in the planning and management of the protected area as appropriate. This participatory process **should** include institutional arrangements for the effective participation and empowerment of stakeholders and local communities.

Implementation Mechanism

- a) With regard to the characteristics specific to each area, the management framework **should** address those measures cited in Article 5.2 relevant to (1) the goals, objectives and specific threats at that particular area and (2) those that are within the scope of the management framework.
- b) The management framework **should** address public awareness and education programmes for users, decision-makers and the public to enhance their appreciation and understanding of protected areas and of the objectives for which they were established, and enable them to participate in planning and management, as appropriate.
- c) The protected area **must** benefit from research and monitoring programme allowing the assessment of the effectiveness of the management framework in achieving the relevant conservation goals. The programme should use appropriate indicators to evaluate the impact of conservation measures on the status of species populations, habitats and ecological processes, within the protected area and its surroundings, as well as the impact of the management plan on the local human communities.

Management Effectiveness

- 18. The Party **must** demonstrate that the protected area management framework is adequate to achieve the biophysical and socioeconomic objectives that the Party has established for a particular area.

D. PROCEDURE FOR THE NOMINATIONS AND FOR LISTING AND DELISTING¹

19. In accordance with Article 7(3), each Party shall submit an inventory of protected areas, over which it exercises sovereignty, or sovereign rights or jurisdiction, which are suitable for inclusion in the list of protected areas under SPAW, and in keeping with these guidelines and criteria.
20. Each Party making a nomination shall provide the secretariat, for subsequent distribution to the STAC, with the necessary supporting documentation, including in particular, the information noted in Article 19(2), clearly specifying boundaries with supporting maps, the completed, as appropriate, "Annotated Format for the Presentation Reports for the Areas Proposed for Inclusion in the SPAW List "(UNEP(DEC)/CAR WG.29/4Rev.1) and a detailed presentation of the criteria for which the site is presented referring to Section B. "Ecological, Cultural and Socio-Economic Criteria".
21. The nomination for inclusion of an area or areas in the SPAW Protected Areas List will be assessed by the STAC according to the Protocol Provisions and the criteria set out in Sections 1A, 1B, and 1C of this document. To this end, the STAC may request assistance of the SPAW RAC in applying a standard evaluation process which may include external review, as appropriate. Parties should attach a summary to their evaluation documents when submitting it to the secretariat.
22. On the basis of the inventories submitted by the Parties, and the evaluation made by STAC, with the assistance of the SPAW RAC if requested, the secretariat shall present an updated list of protected areas to the COP for consideration of final listing.
23. The inclusion of a site under the List requires the consent of the Party concerned.
24. The Party concerned may propose at any time to withdraw any of its sites under the List. The proposal of withdrawal shall be made by an instrument in writing. The secretariat shall subsequently inform the other Parties of such proposal.
25. Every 5 years from the inscription in the List, Parties shall report to the STAC through the secretariat regarding any changes in the status of their listed protected areas pursuant to Articles 15, 19 and 20. Using this information, the STAC shall evaluate and review the List of Protected Areas pursuant to Article 15(2), using the criteria set out in sections 1A, 1B, and 1C of this document, and applying a standard evaluation process, which may include external review, as appropriate. Based on this evaluation, the STAC may take one or more of the following steps:
 - a) It may decide that no protected areas changed significantly in status and advise that no further action should be taken;
 - b) When the STAC considers that the status of any particular protected area has

¹ Adapted from the last version of the Guidelines (UNEP(DEC)/CAR IG.25/3), the Working Group discussions, and the "Convention concerning the protection of world cultural and natural heritage - Paris, 16/11/1972"

significantly changed, but not to the extent that its restoration is impossible, it will so inform the Party exercising sovereignty, or sovereign rights or jurisdiction over the area in question, and advise on measures necessary to restore the area within a reasonable period of time. The STAC may also advise that technical co-operation be provided under the SPAW Programme of Work, for work connected with the restoration of the area, and propose that the State Party request such assistance, if this has not already been done;

- c) When there is evidence that a protected area has deteriorated to the point where it has irretrievably lost those characteristics which determined its inscription on the List, the STAC may advise that the Party that exercises sovereignty, or sovereign rights or jurisdiction over the protected area in question propose to withdraw the protected area from the List. Any comments, which the Party may make, shall be brought to the attention of the STAC. In accordance with Article 7 and 15, such Party may propose to delist the area or areas from the SPAW Protected Area List for approval by the Conference of the Parties;
- d) When the information available is not sufficient to enable the STAC to take one of the measures described in a), b), or c) above, the STAC may request the secretariat to seek information from the relevant Party on the present condition, the changes to and the feasibility of adequately restoring the protected area in question, and to report to the STAC on the results of its enquiry. Such measures may include *inter alia* the sending of a fact-finding mission or the consultation of specialists, in cooperation with the Party involved.